

Long Beach Press Telegram

SoCal transport plan OK'd

But federal dollars may be lost, thanks to state budget cuts.

By Lisa Mascaro
staff writer

Thursday, April 01, 2004 - Officials approved Southern California's sweeping \$210 billion blueprint for transportation spending on Thursday, but the region still risks having its federal funding halted if the plan's promised improvements can't be completed because of looming state budget cuts.

The region stands to lose up to \$8 billion if federal officials determine there isn't enough money to carry out the plan's smog-cutting goals.

"The state budget is the big question mark out there," said Bev Perry, president of the Southern California Association of Governments and a Brea councilwoman.

"It's one of those things we're prepared for. You're concerned. If we lose substantial dollars from the state, we're looking at a huge loss."

Regional officials have braced for changes that could be required if the state's \$4 billion in past and future cuts to transportation jeopardize the work they want to do.

The 2004 Regional Transportation Plan "Destination 2030" is hammered out every three years to outline transportation planning across the six-county region.

For the first time, the plan calls for land-use decisions to help solve transportation problems. It encourages high-rise, mixed-use office and residential developments near freeways and public transit routes to help reduce congestion by having people live closer to where they work.

"Today was a big step. By the action taken today, we have moved forward with a major blueprint for Southern California's transportation system," said SCAG spokesman Jeff Lustgarten.

The plan projects that the six-county region will grow by 6 million people, to nearly 23 million or the equivalent of two Chicagos mostly from births. The amount of time wasted in traffic jams is expected to more than double.

The plan was approved 50-2 by the regional council, made up of elected officials from across the six counties Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Orange, Riverside, Ventura and Imperial.

Among the dissenters was Glendale Councilman Bob Yousefian, who opposed the plan's airport projections that call for more than doubling the capacity at Bob Hope Airport in Burbank to in excess of 10 million annual passengers.

"The numbers were so high that physically it's impossible," he said. "It's just impossible for us to be able to accommodate that many passengers."

He tried unsuccessfully to have the plan amended so that the airport, which now sees about 4.7million passengers, would accommodate 6.8 million by 2030.